

Interloper Returns to Evans Mumbower Mill

by H. Kirk Horstman

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James Althouse, a current resident of Ohio, returned to the scene of the crime in October. He is quick to point out that there actually was no crime, other than trespassing. But what else would you expect from a teenage boy and his friends?

James (he was known as “Bucky” then) explored the mill in the 1960s when it was abandoned and dilapidated. He remembers that Miss Violet Haines used to holler at them from the house next door. Althouse emphasizes that there was no vandalism. They just wanted to know how things had worked back in the days before the mill shut down in 1930.

As a matter of fact they brought their teacher, Mr. Arthur Driedger to inspect their discovery.

Althouse’s primary accomplice was a boy named Raymond Larue. Larue was reportedly a member of the Junior Historians club. Since the mill was boarded up at the time, they all had to crawl through a small opening at ground level where the steam pipes entered the rear of the mill at one point in time.

This was not Althouse’s first trip back to Swedesford Road. In the 1990s he visited after hearing from his mother that WVWA had initiated restoration of the mill. At that time he turned over slides taken in circa 1961, recalling that processing one roll of film had taken quite a chunk of his allowance at the time. Perhaps more importantly he submitted a number of paper items that he had salvaged as a boy (including bills, receipts, etc.). These items are more than a century old now, and many of them are imprinted with the Mumbower name. They are invaluable and have been stored in our archives.

James did not come back empty-handed this time either. He returned with a wooden belt wheel. He had not actually taken the wheel from the building. Instead he had found it many years ago floating downstream in the Wissahickon Creek after a storm. The wheel has since traveled all around the United States; and it even spent a few years on a fireplace mantel in France. Althouse figured it was time that the wheel be returned to its original home. We subsequently found an identical mate inside the current building on the bolter (aka flour sifter). Kirk Horstman expressed WVWA’s gratitude and thanked James for being such a foresighted young man, as well as a conscientious adult.